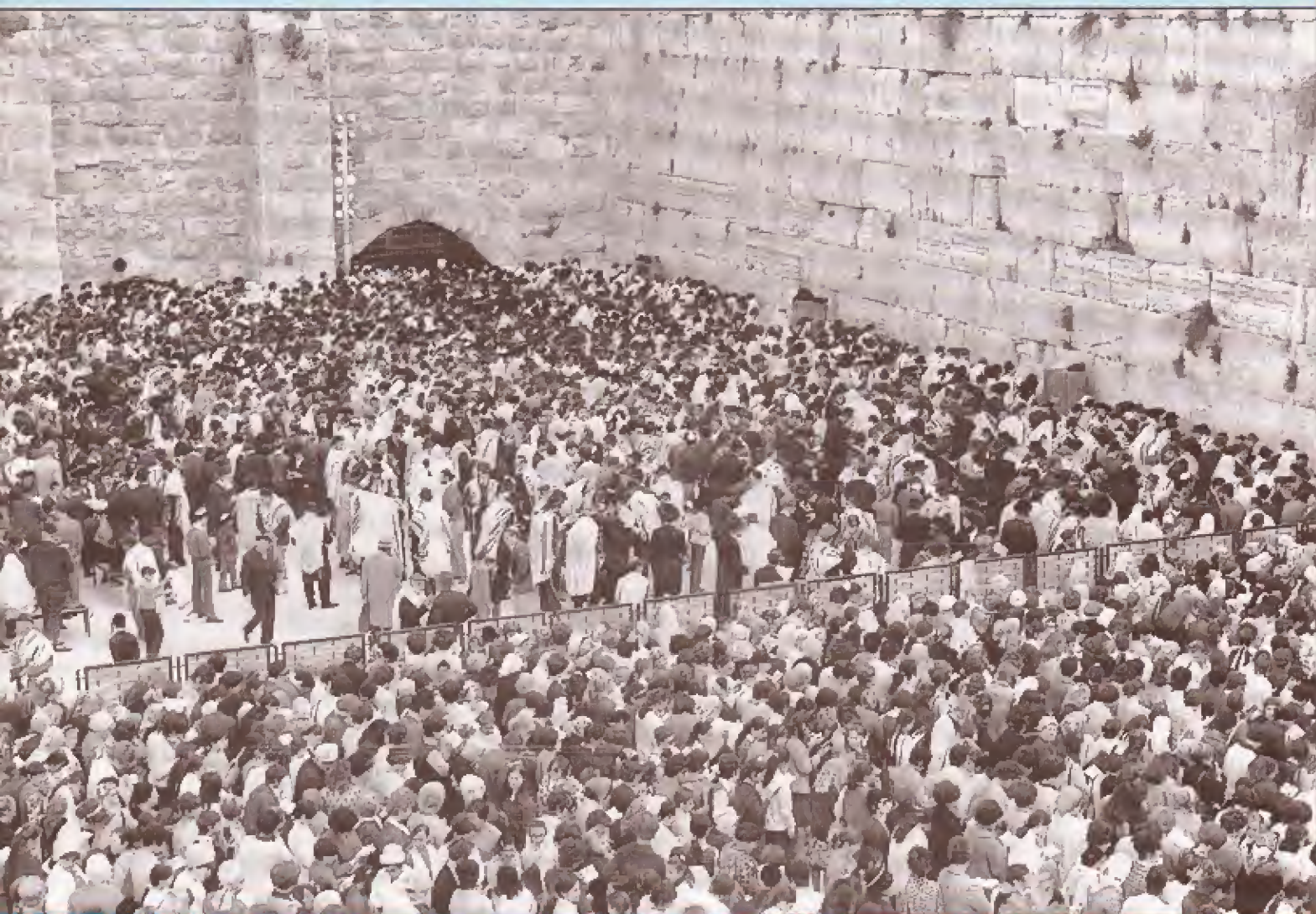


September/October 1993  
Number 40

מנקודת ראות ירושלמית

# Jerusalem Perspective

Exploring the Jewish Background to the Life and Words of Jesus



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I was puzzled by David Bivin's January/February column ("Understanding the Roots of the Bible") inasmuch as Bivin makes a case against spelling the name Y'shua with an apostrophe. The rules of

transliteration are to enable correct pronunciation that approximates the sound in Hebrew. By spelling it with an apostrophe, we put the accent where it belongs, on the second syllable. Bivin seems to feel that this is an "English corruption."

We spell Y'shua with an apostrophe and agree with Bivin on the correct pronunciation. If spelled with an "e" (Yeshua), it would be pronounced by most readers with the accent on the first syllable. We want to get an even pronunciation.

Whether the synoptic Gospels were written in Hebrew is purely a matter of speculation. We know they were transmitted in Greek, and Greek was commonly spoken. There has never been enough of a reason to believe they were originally written in Hebrew. Bivin and his colleagues use the word "apparently" for what is not so apparent to most 20th century scholars of Hebrew and Greek.

Moishe Rosen, director  
Jews for Jesus  
San Francisco, CA

The preceding Letter to the Editor appeared in the September/October 1992 issue of *Ministries Today* (Strang Communications, Lake Mary, Florida), in response to my January/February 1992 column in *Ministries Today* (p. 46). In this column I wrote: "...the spelling Y'shua is an English corruption of the name. English-speakers normally shorten a vowel in an unstressed syllable to the "uh" sound — for instance the final "a" in banana or the "o" in collide. In fact, in their pronunciation, a vowel in an unstressed syllable is often so short that it is scarcely audible. Because the accent in the word ye-SHU-a is on the second syllable, English-speakers have a tendency to slur the first syllable. Y'shua is a result of someone spelling Yeshua as they mispronounce it."

Several years ago, I spoke to Mr. Rosen in Jerusalem and expressed my reservations about his transliteration of Jesus' name. At the time, he argued that adopting the transliteration "Y'shua" gave his organization a distinctive spelling that was useful for advertising purposes. I am glad that Rosen now expresses interest in a transliteration that will "enable correct pronunciation that approximates the sound in Hebrew."

The Jews for Jesus spelling of Jesus' name probably came about due to a particular mispronunciation of Hebrew that is characteristic of English-speakers. The creator of this transliteration apparently believed that the initial vowel in Jesus' name is a shewa (e), an "uh" sound, and so

(continued on page 15)

**Cover photo:**  
Passover pilgrims  
(April 3, 1972) gathered for morning prayers at the Western Wall (Wailing Wall), a section of the retaining wall built to support Herod's Temple. Note the divider that separates the women from the men.

(Courtesy of the Israel Government Press Office)

## Jerusalem Perspective

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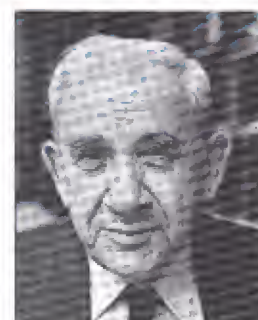
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# The Place of Women in First-century Synagogues

Today, public worship can take place in a synagogue only if at least ten adult Jewish males are present. Women do not qualify as part of this quorum. Furthermore, women are separated from men within the synagogue: women worship in an *ezrat nashim*, a balcony or section with a divider located beside or behind the men's section. Things were considerably different in Jesus' day.



*Shmuel Safrai is professor of Jewish History of the Mishnaic and Talmudic Period at the Hebrew University.*

by Shmuel Safrai

In the time of Jesus there was no separation of the sexes in the synagogue<sup>1</sup> and women could be counted as part of the ten individuals needed for a religious quorum. This allowed women to be much more active in the religious life of the community than they are today.

## The "Ten"

According to halachah, in order to have a congregation or *Edah*, a minimum of ten persons must be present. Boaz gathered ten elders of Bethlehem to witness the legal transaction that gave him possession of the land that belonged to Naomi, and Ruth the Moabitess as his wife.<sup>2</sup> By the first century C.E. it was established that every public or official religious gathering must have ten persons. Therefore, public or congregational prayer could not be conducted without that minimum presence.

The Mishnah preserves the ruling concerning this required minimum number:

If there are less than ten present, the congregation may not recite the Shema with its benedictions, nor may one go before the ark [to lead the prescribed congregational prayers], nor may priests lift up their hands [in pronouncing the blessing],<sup>3</sup> nor may one read the portion of the Torah or the Prophets, nor may one observe the stations [when burying the dead]<sup>4</sup> or say the mourners' benediction or the mourners' consolation, or the benediction over newlyweds, nor may one mention the name of God in the invitation to recite the blessing after the

meal. Also [the redemption value of dedicated] immovable property [is assessed] by nine and a priest, and similarly, [the valuation vow<sup>5</sup> of] a person. (Megillah 4:3)

The importance of this religious quorum cannot be overestimated. Rabbi Eliezer, a member of the generation that witnessed the destruction of the Temple, freed one of his slaves so that there would be a quorum of ten for the "Eighteen Benedictions,"<sup>6</sup> the central prayer of the synagogue service.

Modern Jews call the congregational quorum a *minyan* (min-YAN, numbering, count). In the Second Temple period, however, when Jews wished to refer to the required quorum they used the term *asa-rah* ('a-sa-RAH, ten). Used in this sense, the word *minyan* does not appear in Jewish literature until the fifteenth–sixteenth centuries C.E. When *minyan* occurs in sources from the Second Temple period, it refers to a vote taken by members of the Sanhedrin.

What is more important, the idea that ten *males* are required for this quorum is not found in ancient sources until at least 500 C.E. Before then, women could be counted as part of the "ten." Even as late as the twelfth century C.E., authorities such as the Jewish scholar Rabbenu Tam acknowledged that women could be counted as part of the congregational quorum.

## Good Attendance

In the first century, women were the equals of men religiously and frequently visited the synagogue. This can easily be documented from literary sources. Here are just a few examples:

1. Judges 5:24 records Deborah's blessing

of Jael — “most blessed of women in tents.” The Targum’s translation is: “Like one of the women who attend the houses of study she will be blessed,” translating “tents” as “houses of study.” “House of study” (in Hebrew, *bet midrash*) is an equivalent expression for “synagogue,” since the “house of study” was usually connected with a synagogue, and studies took place in the synagogue’s assembly hall or in a room adjoining it.

2. In the Jerusalem Talmud the question is raised: “In a town in which all the residents are priests, when they spread their hands [in the synagogue] and give the priestly blessing, who responds ‘Amen?’” (The priests themselves are not permitted to give the response to their own blessing.) The answer is: “The women and children.”<sup>7</sup> Although not the point of the discussion, this rabbinic ruling indicates that women were in attendance at the synagogue.

3. There is the following tannaic halachah: “A [Jewish] woman may set a pot on the stove and let a Gentile woman come and stir its contents until she returns from the bathhouse or synagogue, without concern [that the food will not be kosher because of the prohibition against food cooked by a Gentile].”<sup>8</sup>

Women usually cooked in their courtyards to avoid smoking up their houses. Occasionally, a Jewish woman and a Gentile woman shared a courtyard in which they both did their cooking. Halachah did not permit the Jewish woman’s family to eat food cooked by the Gentile neighbor; however, if the Gentile woman stirred the Jewish woman’s cooking while the Jewish woman ran to the public baths or the synagogue for a few minutes, the Gentile woman was not considered to have cooked the food.

This story demonstrates that the synagogue, like the public baths, was one of the ordinary places to which Jewish women went. In this respect, women were no different from men.

4. One of the minor tractates of the Talmud transmits the rabbinic regulation that, although on Sabbaths the people came early to synagogue, “On festivals they come late because they have to prepare the food for the day.”<sup>9</sup>

The second “they” in the quotation refers to the female members of congregations. It was the women who needed the early morning hours of holidays for preparation of food. Much of the preparation of the main holiday meal, eaten at midday after the

family returned from the synagogue, was done early on the morning of the holiday before the family went to the synagogue. Lighting a fire to cook food, while not permitted on Sabbaths, was permitted on festivals. Therefore, to accommodate the women, the synagogue service was started later on festival days than on Sabbaths. If the women’s participation in synagogue worship had been felt to be less vital than the men’s, as is the case today, there would have been no reason to delay the holiday service: the men could have conducted the service while the women were preparing the meal.

## Religious Obligation?

Modern Jewish commentators often explain women’s non-inclusion in the *minyan* as being the result of women’s exemption from positive commandments that need to be done at a set time. Since public worship is a commandment that is done at a set time, these commentators say, women are exempt from participation in public worship. A woman nursing a child, for instance, cannot be expected to attend a scheduled synagogue service.

It is not true, however, that there is a set time for synagogue services. There may be an agreed time in a particular synagogue for the beginning of a service, but such arrangements vary from synagogue to synagogue. In addition, it is not true that public worship is a religious obligation. A Jew is not obligated to pray as part of a congregation.

The “Eighteen Benedictions” was the central prayer of the synagogue liturgy. Every Jew was obligated to pray this prayer daily. Rabban Gamaliel said: “One must say the ‘Eighteen’ every day.”<sup>10</sup> There was no difference between men and women regarding this commandment. The Mishnah specifically states: “Women...are not exempt from saying the Prayer [i.e., the Eighteen Benedictions].”<sup>11</sup>

Because the “Eighteen Benedictions” is such an important part of the synagogue liturgy, and because this prayer is obligatory, it is often assumed today that synagogue attendance is obligatory. However, in the first century it was permissible to pray the “Eighteen Benedictions” privately. One was not required to recite this prayer together with others. In emergencies, one could fulfill the obligation to say this prayer daily by saying even a two- or three-sentence abbreviation of it.<sup>12</sup>



The rabbis viewed prayer as an "obligation of the heart." One could pray anywhere at any time of the day. Even a short prayer of thanksgiving fulfilled the commandment to say the "Eighteen" every day.

## Women's Section

In the first century there was no special women's section in the synagogue. Moreover, there was no divider, as there is today, that separated female from male members of the congregation.

It is true that second-story galleries are attested in fourth- to sixth-century C.E. synagogues in the land of Israel. Architectural evidence for these galleries is the remains of stairs found in some synagogue ruins. However, the galleries were not necessarily for women. This is shown by the fact that the bottom of the stairway is often located inside the synagogue's assembly hall, for instance in the fourth-century synagogue at Khirbet Shema and the fifth- to sixth-century synagogue at Beth Alpha. Therefore, any woman who attempted to reach such a gallery would have had to mix with the male congregants, a contradiction to the assumption that in the synagogue men and women were separated.<sup>13</sup>

Outside the land of Israel, archaeologists discovered an amazingly well preserved synagogue at Dura-Europos. This mid-third-century C.E. synagogue also provides evidence that there was no separation of

men and women in the ancient synagogue. In the Dura-Europos synagogue, the congregants sat on two rows of plastered, tiered benches that surrounded the rectangular assembly hall on all four sides. There were no dividers along the benches or anywhere within the hall (and no gallery). This lack of dividers indicates that women were not segregated within the synagogue. Tiered benches lacking dividers were also part of the architecture of the first-century synagogue at Masada. In addition, the Masada synagogue had only one entrance. A single entrance meant that women mixed with men when entering and leaving the synagogue.

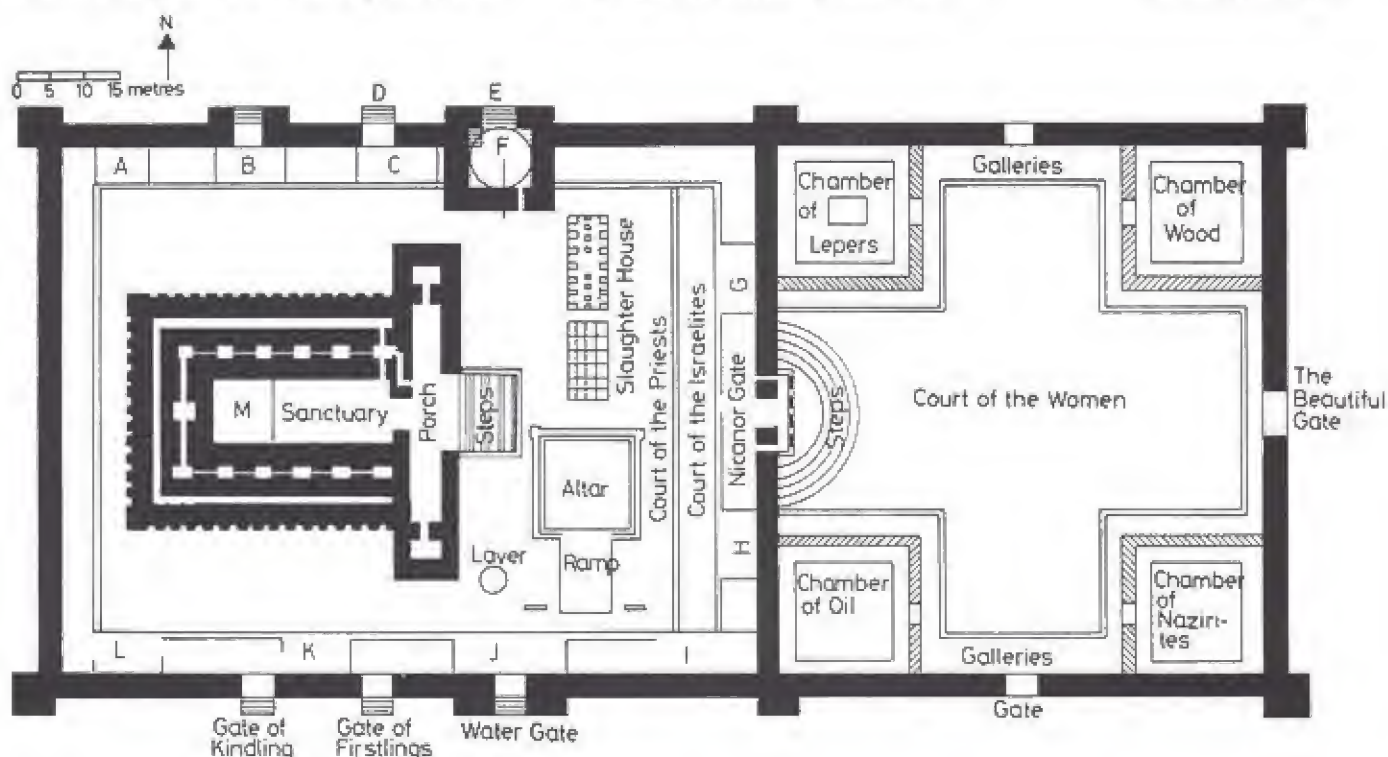
## No Segregation

It should be emphasized that there was also no separation of men and women in the Temple. Women were allowed in every area of the Temple precincts in which men were allowed.<sup>14</sup> The Women's Court, the outer court of the Temple, was not reserved for women; in this court men and women mingled. Men had to pass through the Women's Court to reach the Israelites' Court (Men's Court). Located in the Women's Court were various chambers, such as the Nazirites' Chamber, to which both men and women had access. Public assemblies took place in the Women's Court: it was there on the Day of Atonement that the High Priest read the Torah before the people,<sup>15</sup> and in this court the *Hakhel* assembly was held.<sup>16</sup>

### Plan of the Second Temple.

- A - Salt Chamber
- B - Rinsing Chamber
- C - Parvah Chamber
- D - Offering Gate
- E - Gate of the Flame
- F - Chamber of the Hearth
- G - Chamber of Phinehas, Keeper of Vestments
- H - Chamber of Makers of Baked Cakes
- I - Chamber of Hewn Stone
- J - House of Atrinas
- K - Golah Chamber
- L - Wood Chamber
- M - Holy of Holies

(From *The Jewish People in the First Century*, ed. Shmuel Safrai and Menahem Stern [Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1976], p. 568.)



The outer court of the Temple was called the Women's Court because normally women did not go beyond it into the more interior courts of the Temple.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, the Israelites' Court was so named because normally non-priestly men did not go beyond it into the Priests' Court. However, like men, women offered their sacrifices at the Altar in the Priests' Court, passing through the Israelites' Court in order to do so.<sup>18</sup> If, for instance, a woman offered a wave offering such as first fruits, she approached the Altar, waved the offering, and placed it beside the Altar.<sup>19</sup>

Women were segregated in the Temple only during the Water Drawing Ceremony held on the Feast of Tabernacles, when dancing went on all night. At this celebration, men watched from the Women's Court and women watched from specially erected galleries surrounding the Women's Court as "men of piety and good deeds" danced before them while holding torches in their hands.<sup>20</sup>

## An Inequality

In Jesus' time, women participated fully in the religious life of the community. This included participation in synagogue services and in the regular study sessions that were conducted in the synagogue's *bet midrash* (house of study). There was no separation of the sexes in synagogues and women could be counted as part of the required congregational quorum of ten adults. There was, however, one inequality. For social reasons, women were not allowed to read the Scriptures publicly.

In the Babylonian Talmud and the Tosefta, we find an early rabbinic (tannaic) ruling: "All are qualified to be among the seven [who read from the Torah in the synagogue on the Sabbath], even a minor or a woman; however, the sages ruled that a woman should not read from the Torah out of respect for the congregation."<sup>21</sup> This is apparently a reference to the same social custom or decorum that we find mentioned in Paul's letter to the Corinthians: "Women should keep silent in the churches. They are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Torah states. If they want to learn anything, they should ask their husbands at home, for it is a disgrace for a woman to speak in the congregation."<sup>22</sup>

Paul felt it necessary to issue his corrective because in early Christian congregations, following Jewish practice, it was permissible and customary to interrupt the preacher to

ask questions. In first-century synagogues, a sermon followed the reading of Scripture. This exposition of Scripture was more a lesson than a sermon, and congregants were encouraged to ask questions. In fact, the asking of questions was so central to the rabbinic teaching method that often the preacher-teacher began his sermon by just seating himself and waiting until someone from the audience asked a question. There is a whole category of Jewish literature called *ye-lam DE-nu ra-BE-nu*, May our teacher instruct us). It is similar to what we now call "Questions and Answers." Today public speakers often employ a Question-and-Answer period, especially as a means of clarification at the end of a lecture. In first-century Jewish society this approach was usually the main method of instruction.

From Paul's injunction we learn that at public religious gatherings of early Christians, women sat with men in the same hall, perhaps even next to their husbands or fathers. Paul's command itself implies a mixed audience: there would have been nothing indecorous about a woman asking a question in a group composed entirely of women.

If there had been separation of men and women in first-century synagogues, it is likely that the early church would have continued the custom. However, the New Testament gives no indication that the early church had such a custom. **JP**

1. The modern custom of separating men and women in the synagogue is perhaps due to the influence of Islam, from approximately the seventh century C.E. onward.

2. Ruth 4:2.

3. Numbers 6:24–26.

4. Literally, "standing and sitting." As the mourners returned from the burial, they stopped seven times to lament the deceased.

5. A vow to dedicate to the Temple an amount equal to one's value (if sold into slavery) or equal to the value of someone else.

6. Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 47<sup>b</sup>.

7. Jerusalem Talmud, Berachot 9<sup>d</sup>.

8. Babylonian Talmud, Avodah Zarah 38a–b.

9. Soferim 18:4.

10. Mishnah, Berachot 4:3.

11. Mishnah, Berachot 3:3.

12. David Bivin, "Prayers for Emergencies," *Jerusalem Perspective* 37 (Mar./Apr. 1992), 16–17.

13. Shmuel Safrai, *The Land of Israel and Its*

(continued on page 14)



# That Small-fry Herod Antipas, or When a Fox Is Not a Fox

מְתוּרְגֵּמָן (*me-tur-ge-MAN*) is Hebrew for translator. The articles in this series illustrate how a knowledge of the Gospels' Semitic background can provide a deeper understanding of Jesus' words and influence the translation process.

by Randall Buth

Jesus called Herod Antipas a fox (Luke 13:32), and English-speakers and Europeans assume the point is obvious. Foxes are proverbially associated with cleverness and craftiness. Therefore, Jesus must be calling Herod a crafty person. However, it turns out that Jesus was saying something very different to his Hebrew-speaking audience.

The metaphor "fox" has proven deceptive to speakers of European languages. Many New Testament specialists have followed the clear, widely known sense of the Greek word and idiom without first asking an important question: "How was 'fox' used by Hebrew-speakers?" The answer reveals a difference in Hebrew and Greek usage, and it should serve as a reminder that one must always interpret metaphors within the proper cultural setting.<sup>1</sup>

## The Context

The context of Jesus' characterization of Herod as a fox is a story that appears in Luke 13:31–33:

At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you." He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day — for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!" (*New International Version*)

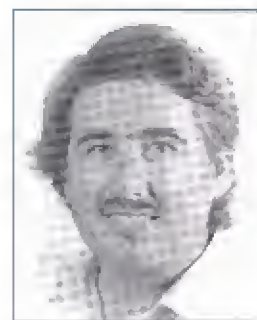
A student finds the following note to Luke 13:32 in the *NIV Study Bible*: "fox. A crafty animal."

Reading the passage in Greek will not help if one is limited to standard Greek reference works. The Greek word for "fox" is ἀλώπηξ (*alōpēx*). The word is as old as the Greek language, and Liddell and Scott state that *alōpēx* means "fox, *Canis vulpes*" and that it is used proverbially "of sly persons."<sup>2</sup> The standard Greek dictionary for the New Testament leads to a similar conclusion: Walter Bauer states that "fox" is used figuratively of crafty people.<sup>3</sup>

## First Hebraic Meaning

In Hebrew, "fox" (שׁוּאָל, *shu'AL*) has a wider range of meaning than in Greek or English. First, Hebrew culture shared with the rest of ancient Mediterranean cultures the implication of "fox" as a crafty animal. The Midrash gives an example:

When the other kingdoms are described figuratively in Scripture, they are compared to wild beasts: "Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea" [Dan. 7:3], and it is also written, "The first was like a lion" [Dan. 7:4]. But when Scripture speaks of the Egyptians, they are compared to foxes, as it says, "Catch for us the foxes" [Song 2:15]; keep them for the river [i.e., to be thrown into the river, as the Egyptians threw the Israelite babies into the river]. R. Eleazar ben R. Shim'on [end of second century A.D.] said, "The Egyptians were crafty and that is why Scripture compares them to foxes."<sup>4</sup>



Dr. Randall Buth is a Bible translation consultant in Africa.

There is a similar reference to “fox” in a parable attributed to Rabbi Akiva (early second century A.D.):

A fox was once walking alongside a river and he saw fish swarming from place to place. He said to them, “What are you fleeing from?” “From the nets that humans cast for us,” they answered. The fox said to them, “Wouldn’t you like to come up on the dry land? We could live together, you and I, just like our forefathers.” They answered, “You’re the one they call the cleverest of animals? You aren’t clever. You’re a fool. If we are afraid in our own element, how much more out of our element [literally, in our place of death]!”<sup>5</sup>

## Second Hebraic Meaning

More important for our understanding of Jesus’ words in Luke chapter 13 is a second, very common use of “fox” in Hebrew. Lions and foxes can be contrasted with each other to represent the difference between great men and inferior men. The great men are called “lions,” and the lesser men are called “foxes.”

The epithet “fox” is sometimes applied to Torah scholars: “There are lions before you, and you ask foxes?”<sup>6</sup> In other words, “Why do you ask the opinion of foxes, that is, my opinion, when there are distinguished scholars present?”

A certain scholar, thought at first to be brilliant, was by all outward signs inept, and it was remarked about him, “The lion you mentioned turns out to be a [mere] fox.”<sup>7</sup>

Sometimes the use of “fox” relates to pedigree: “He is a lion the son of a lion, but you are a lion the son of a fox.”<sup>8</sup> In other words, “He is a distinguished scholar and the son of a distinguished scholar; but, although you are a distinguished scholar, your father is a less-distinguished scholar than his.”

The word “fox” can also have moral connotations, as a saying from the Mishnah demonstrates: “Be a tail to lions rather than a head to foxes.”<sup>9</sup> This saying could be paraphrased, “It is better to be someone of low rank among those who are morally and spiritually your superiors than someone of high rank among scoundrels.”

The phrase, “And infants will rule over them,” from the list of curses in Isaiah 3:1–7 to be visited upon Jerusalem and Judah, is interpreted by the Babylonian Talmud as follows: “[Infants means] foxes,

sons of foxes.”<sup>10</sup> In this interpretation, “fox” not only assumes the nuance of moral depravity, but also, through the verb “rule,” is linked to kingly reign; thus, “foxes, sons of foxes” means “worthless, degenerate rulers who are the descendants of worthless, degenerate rulers.”

A rabbinic interpretation of the phrase “[Your fury] consumes them like straw” (Exod. 15:7) makes the comparison between the Egyptians and foxes using the same prooftext as Song of Songs Rabbah quoted above. Here, however, the focus of the fox metaphor is explicitly on low status.

When any kind of wood burns, there is some substance to it. But when straw burns, there is no substance to it. Since it is said, “And he took six hundred choice chariots,” etc. [Exod. 14:7], I might have understood that there was some substance to them [the Egyptians]; but Scripture says, “It consumes them like straw.” Just as there is no substance to straw when it burns, so also with the Egyptians. When they burned, it became evident that there was no substance to them in the face of the calamities that you brought upon them....There was no kingdom more lowly than Egypt, but it held power a short time for the sake of Israel’s glory. When Scripture describes other kingdoms figuratively, it compares them to cedars...but when it describes the Egyptians, it compares them to straw, as it is said, “It consumes them like straw”....Again, when Scripture describes other kingdoms figuratively, it compares them to wild beasts, as it is said, “And four great beasts” [Dan. 7:3], but when it describes the Egyptians, it compares them to foxes, as it is said, “Catch for us the foxes” [Song 2:15]....“It [Egypt] will be the most contemptible of the kingdoms” [Ezek. 29:15].<sup>11</sup>

## The Sting in “Fox”

Jesus called Herod a fox after some Pharisees reported that Herod wanted to kill Jesus. Jesus’ response challenged any such plans: “Tell Herod I’ve got work to do first.” Jesus was not implying that Herod was sly, rather he was commenting on Herod’s ineptitude or inability to carry out his threat. Jesus questioned the tetrarch’s pedigree, moral stature and leadership, and put the tetrarch “in his place.” This exactly fits the second rabbinic usage of “fox.”

When Jesus labeled Herod a fox, Jesus implied that Herod was not a lion. Herod considered himself a lion, but Jesus pointed



out that Herod was the opposite of a lion. Jesus cut Herod down to size, and Jesus' audience may have had an inward smile of appreciation at a telling riposte.

## Translating "Fox"

English versions of Luke 13:32 fail on two counts when they use the word "fox." On the one hand, they miss the true dynamics of the rebuke, and on the other hand, they implicitly give a false, positive meaning. What is needed is a colorful English term that can be used across wide audiences. That last requirement is difficult, because words of scorn are often excessively vulgar or restricted to rather small subsets of English-speakers.

Consider the following list of possibilities for "fox" in its negative sense: "weakling, small-fry, usurper, poser, clown, insignificant person, creampuff, nobody, weasel, jackass, tin soldier, peon, hick, pompous pretender, jerk, upstart."

Most of the terms in this list are too colloquial or jocular. "Small-fry," "insignificant person," "peon," and "pompous pretender" may be the best for a wide audience. In context, and referring to a local ruler, "fox" was a humiliating "slap in the face." The English term should convey this intent as nearly as possible.

We need to start translating "fox" with its proper Hebrew cultural meaning. Jesus was direct. Antipas was a *שׂוֹקֵל בֶּן שׂוֹקֵל* (*shu<sup>2</sup>AL ben shu<sup>2</sup>AL*, a fox, the son of a fox), a small-fry.<sup>12</sup> JP

1. This is true for any language around the world. One should always assume that metaphors carry different connotations until proven otherwise, even in languages with tremendous cultural overlap like English and French: "cow" and "*vache*" carry completely different implications.

2. Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, revised and augmented by Henry Stuart Jones with Roderick McKenzie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 75. Under the meaning "sly persons," they list examples from: Solon [6th cent. B.C.] II 5; Pindar [5th cent. B.C.], *Isthmian Odes* 4 (3).65; Plato [4th cent. B.C.], *Republic* 365c; Eunapius [4th-5th cent. A.D.], *Historicus*, p. 249D; and Diogenianus 2.15, 2.73, 5.15, 7.91.

3. Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 41. This lexicon includes many references to Greek works outside the New Testament such as the works of the first-century philosopher Epictetus.

4. Song of Songs Rabbah 2:15, § 1.

5. Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 61<sup>b</sup>.

6. Jerusalem Talmud, Shevi'it 39<sup>a</sup>, chpt. 9, halachah 5.

7. Babylonian Talmud, Bava Kamma 117<sup>a</sup>.

8. Jerusalem Talmud, Shabbat 12<sup>c</sup>, chpt. 10, halachah 5. Compare Bava Mets'a 84<sup>b</sup>.

9. Mishnah, Avot 4:15.

10. Babylonian Talmud, Hagigah 14<sup>a</sup>.

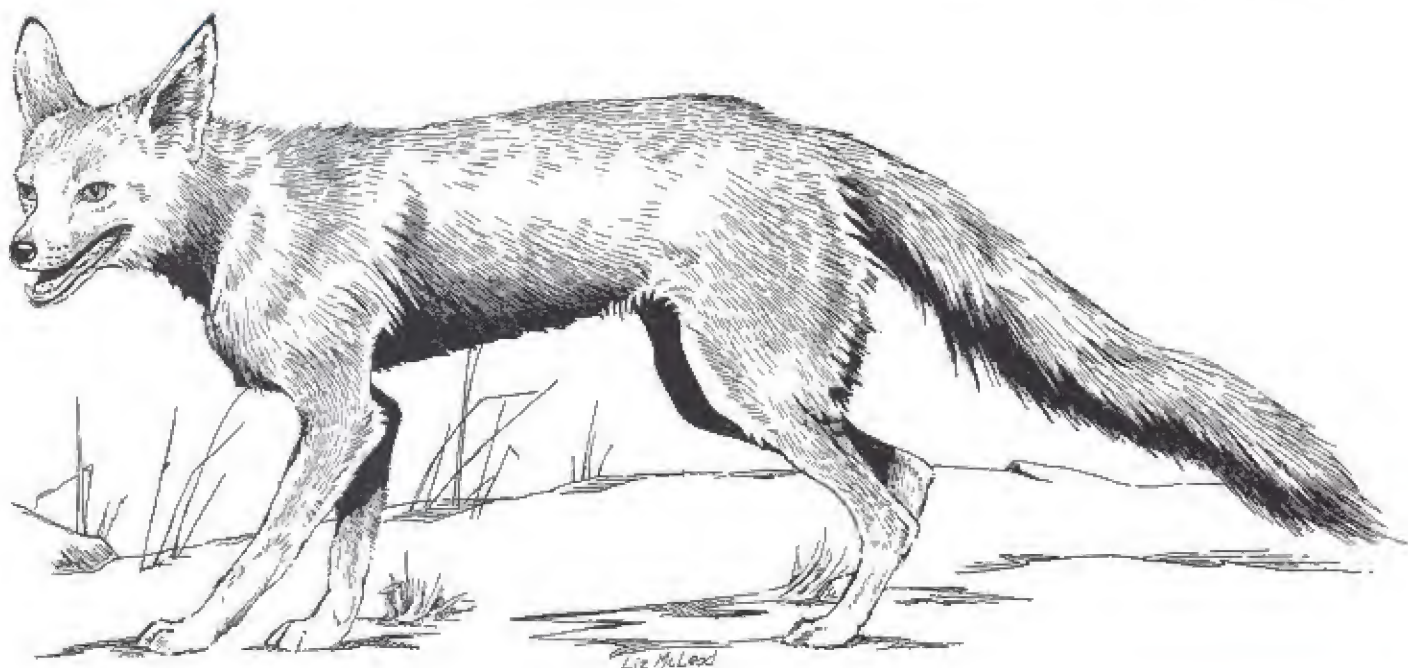
11. Mechilta, Beshallah 6; to Exodus 15:7 (ed. Horovitz-Rabin, p. 137, lines 3-19).

12. Paul Billerbeck has already outlined most

(continued on page 14)

**Canis vulpes.**

(Illustration by Liz McLeod)





# Jesus' Jewish Parents



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In the infancy narrative found in chapters one and two of Luke's Gospel, Luke has provided excellent character references for Mary, Joseph and Jesus. Jesus' mother and father show piety far beyond the usual, and the young Jesus is eager to be in the Temple studying Torah with the teachers of Israel.

by Chana Safrai

**J**ohn the Baptist was born to Zechariah and Elizabeth, and on the eighth day, the neighbors and family gathered to celebrate the baby's circumcision (Lk. 1:57–58). On this occasion, John was given his name (Lk. 1:59). Jesus also received his name at his circumcision: "On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus" (Lk. 2:21).

Circumcision on the eighth day is a biblical commandment (Lev. 12:3; Gen. 21:4), but the public naming of a baby boy on the eighth day and the gathering of family and acquaintances to celebrate the occasion are Second Temple-period Jewish customs.<sup>1</sup> These two customs, attested in the Gospel of Luke for the first time, are still common in Jewish practice.

## Two More Ceremonies

Luke mentions two other Jewish customs (Lk. 2:22–24) observed by Jesus' parents: Mary's offering of the sacrifice for her purification,<sup>2</sup> and Joseph's payment of the ransom for his firstborn son.

According to Scripture, a mother is impure for forty days after the birth of a son. At the end of this period, she is to bring to the Temple an offering for her purification (Lev. 12:1–8). Rabbinic sources indicate that a woman was allowed to postpone her sacrifice until she had an opportunity to go to Jerusalem. Sometimes a mother waited until she had given birth a number of times before offering the prescribed sacrifice for her purification.<sup>3</sup> Often, she waited to fulfill this obligation until the family made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. However, some women performed this rite at the end of the forty-day period in keeping with the biblical injunction. Mary observed the commandment in this way.

A firstborn son can be redeemed from his thirtieth day (Num. 18:14–16). The rabbinic interpretation of this passage encouraged fathers to pay the firstborn's ransom on the thirtieth day, as soon as the baby reached the age of redemption.<sup>4</sup> Luke's story reflects this interpretation; near the time of Mary's purification offering, Joseph paid the ransom for his firstborn son.

The Gospel account demonstrates that Jesus' parents observed the commandments strictly. Towards the end of Mary's period of impurity, they came to Jerusalem so that Joseph could ransom his firstborn son, probably on the child's thirtieth day, and so that Mary could offer the sacrifice for her purification, on the child's forty-first day.

## Typical Jewish Parents

John, too, was a firstborn child, yet there is no mention of Zechariah paying his son's ransom. According to a Jewish tradition still observed today, if a firstborn son's mother or father belongs to a priestly family, the child does not have to be ransomed since the father is exempt from paying ransom money to a fellow priest.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps this is the reason that Luke, though he records both John's circumcision and naming, makes no mention of John's redemption as a firstborn son. Zechariah and Elizabeth were both from priestly families (Lk. 1:5), and therefore Zechariah was not obligated to ransom their son.

Why does Luke not mention that Elizabeth brought a purification sacrifice on her son's forty-first day? Apparently, like most other women of her time and culture, she postponed her purification until a more convenient time. If Elizabeth's practice with regard to the purification sacrifice is typical of contemporary Jewish women, it clearly accentuates the excellence of Mary's conduct in that respect. Luke's account, therefore,



underlines Jesus' exemplary Jewish family background.

## The First Pilgrimage

Luke includes another detail that draws our attention to the quality of Jesus' Jewish upbringing. He informs us that Jesus' parents used to go on Passover pilgrimage every year (Lk. 2:41).<sup>6</sup> Exodus 23:17 speaks of the obligation to appear at the LORD's Temple three times a year, for all major holidays.<sup>7</sup> However, the sages did not take this command literally. Rather, they ruled that "to appear" means that when one *does* make a pilgrimage, one is to bring an "appearance" sacrifice.<sup>8</sup>

A pilgrimage from the Galilee was so expensive and time-consuming that a Galilean usually conducted it only once, or at the most, two or three times in his or her lifetime. Thus, observant Galileans usually did not "go up" to Jerusalem every year.<sup>9</sup> Jesus' parents were exhibiting an exceptional devotion by making an annual pilgrimage.

## The Lost Child

Luke records an incident that may give the impression of parental irresponsibility on the part of Joseph and Mary. For the whole first day of their return journey, they apparently failed to notice that Jesus had been left behind in Jerusalem; they assumed that he was somewhere among the group of pilgrims with whom they were "coming down" from Jerusalem (Lk. 2:44). Rabbinic tradition may help to resolve this difficulty and show Jesus' parents in a more positive light.

We learn from rabbinic literature that, at the start of each pilgrimage, pilgrims gathered in their towns and villages. Whole households would set out, leaving very few people at home.<sup>10</sup> Along the way, the pilgrims joined other bands of pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem.<sup>11</sup> After arriving in Jerusalem, members of these expanded groups tended to remain together, worshiping, studying and walking about the city in the company of those with whom they had journeyed to Jerusalem. By the time pilgrims began their journey home, they had spent more than a week with the members of their group. A self-confident child could easily have spent the first day of the return journey away from his parents, among the large number of new and old acquaintances, without his parents becoming concerned or being thought irresponsible.

The next part of this story is also unusual. When Jesus is finally found, he is in the Temple court, almost holding court himself, sitting and discussing issues of Torah with his elders (Lk. 2:46-47). How far should we believe this of a twelve-year-old boy? Two aspects of the episode should be taken into consideration.

In the rabbinic world, a special effort was made to give everyone an opportunity to participate in discussion. When a question was raised, the first to answer was not the greatest scholar, but rather the youngest. Quiet was not considered of major importance. Neither was there a demand for uniformity of opinion. Students were encouraged to voice their opinions and argue their case.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, it is quite possible that the boy was given a hearing and an opportunity to show his ability, even in the very exalted company of teachers found in the Temple courts.

## Jewish Child Wonders

Despite its possibility within a first-century Jewish context, we must still view a discussion between the twelve-year-old Jesus and some of the greatest teachers of his time as exceptional. This story should be compared with a very small number of similar stories about Jewish child wonders who demonstrated their brilliance in the presence of adult scholars.

For example, there is an interesting story in the Talmud about Rabbi Ishmael.<sup>13</sup> As a child, sometime after the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., he was discovered in a prison by Rabbi Joshua. As a result of an exchange between Joshua (at the gates of the prison) and Ishmael (within the prison) in which Ishmael answered Joshua with great wisdom, Joshua realized that the child was a prodigy and determined to ransom him. In the course of time, Ishmael became a great scholar and sage.

There is a story about Victor (Avigdor) Aptowitz (1871-1942) that is remarkably similar to the story about Jesus. Born in Tarnopol, Galicia, Aptowitz became a prominent Jewish historian and Talmudic scholar. He was a professor at the Jewish Theological Seminary of Vienna from 1909-1938. As a young boy, Aptowitz once traveled with his parents from his hometown of Tarnopol to the market town of the district in which he lived. While the parents were busy with their shopping, he disappeared. After much searching, his parents

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# Pieces to the Synoptic Puzzle: Papias and Luke 1:1–4



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by Joseph Frankovic

**W**hen the argument is advanced for a Hebrew “undertext” behind the Greek of the Synoptic Gospels, the evidence may be separated into two categories: internal and external. Internal evidence refers to evidence that is contained within the Greek text such as Hebraisms and the presence of parables or other types of rabbinic literary forms. External evidence refers to statements preserved in other ancient literature that affirm that Jesus’ life was originally recorded in Hebrew. The most important external evidence is a statement made by Papias, bishop of Hierapolis.

Sometime in the middle of the second century A.D., Papias wrote, “Matthew recorded the sayings [of Jesus] in Hebrew, and everyone translated them as he was able.” Papias’ statement was quoted by another bishop named Eusebius, who lived between 263–339 A.D. It is in Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History*<sup>1</sup> that Papias’ testimony has survived.

Papias provides us with two very important bits of information. The first is that the disciple Matthew recorded the teachings of Jesus in the “Hebrew language.” Although some would argue that Papias’ Ἑβραϊδὶ διαλέκτῳ (*Hebraidi dialektō*) really means Aramaic, this is probably not the case, as Jehoshua Grntz has demonstrated.<sup>2</sup>

The second important bit of information is that other individuals reworked this original Hebrew composition. The question is, in what manner? The Greek verb ἡρμήνευσε (*hērmēneuse*), rendered above as “translated,” can mean “to explain, interpret, or translate.” The ambiguity is generated more by the English language than by the Greek. Apparently the ancients did not make the fine and often arbitrary distinction we do between translation and commentary. To put it another way, the ancients had a different approach to translating sacred texts than that which is taken by

modern scholars. They tended to be less rigid. If there was an unclear verse, it was not uncommon for an ancient translator to help clarify it. If a strong tradition surrounded a certain passage, it was not unusual for elements of that tradition to creep into the text.

A good example of an unclear verse that has been clarified in the process of translation is Genesis 4:8, “And Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against his brother and killed him” (*New American Standard Bible*).

Obviously some important details, such as what Cain told Abel, are missing. These were supplied by the Septuagint translator: “And Cain told Abel his brother, ‘Let us go out into the field’....” It is possible that the translator of the Septuagint had a manuscript in front of him that included the clause, “Let us go out into the field,” but it is just as likely that he felt the text was incomplete and supplied the information.

A more radical example appears in the *targumim*, where such liberties are more common and pronounced. For example, Targum Neofiti’s rendering of Genesis 22:1 is: “Now it came about after these things that the LORD tested Abraham with the tenth test. He said to him, ‘Abraham!’ And Abraham answered in the tongue of the House of the Holy One. And Abraham said to him [the LORD], ‘Here I am.’”

In this one verse two new elements have been introduced: God is testing Abraham for the tenth time; Abraham (the Aramean) answered in Hebrew, the Holy Language. The first is an early and well-known Jewish tradition about this passage. The second represents an issue of great concern to the sages at the time this Targum was composed — the displacement of Hebrew by Aramaic.<sup>3</sup> Both accretions became part of an Aramaic translation of Scripture.

Returning to Papias’ claim, we now ask: What were those individuals who were translating “... as they were able” doing



with Matthew's composition? No definite answer to this question is available. From the above examples, especially that of the *targumim*, it is safe to postulate that all of them were not producing translations akin to the *King James Version*. Some translators treated Matthew's Hebrew composition conservatively, but others may not have. One can imagine that from the very start a proliferation of materials about Jesus' life occurred.

At this point assistance is available from another quarter. In the prologue to his Gospel, Luke writes: "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us...it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you might know the exact truth about the things you have been taught" (*New American Standard Bible*).

Luke is providing another clue to the transmission process of the Gospel sources. Like Papias, he writes that a number of individuals had attempted to compile an account of Jesus' life. He, however, says something more.

Luke's use of *καθεξῆς* (*kathexēs*, consecutive order) implies that confusion had arisen, not just from a proliferation of sources, but from the loss of the story's chronological order. Though this sounds very strange, it is not without precedent in the transmission of other ancient, religious texts. For example, the sages believed that the Book of Isaiah originally began with chapter six. In addition, the chronological discrepancies in the Synoptic Gospels themselves attest to the disruption of the story order. The reason for this disruption remains a mystery. Perhaps it had something to do with lectionary readings in the early church.<sup>4</sup>

Viewed together, Papias' and Luke's statements offer a glimpse of the stages of transmission for the Gospel materials. They inform us that the original story of Jesus was written in Hebrew, that this story was translated and probably reworked by many individuals, and that somehow the original order of events was obscured.

The scenario described above is foundational to Robert Lindsey's synoptic theory. He believes that Matthew's composition, like the Pentateuch of the Septuagint, was translated literally into Greek. Then, this translation was rearranged according to

literary form: incidents in Jesus' life, teachings, and parables. In his prologue Luke seems to be describing conditions that resulted from this reorganization.

Once the composition had been rearranged, attempts were made to piece the story back together. Luke decided to use one such attempt, in conjunction with the reorganized text, in writing his Gospel. Mark based his story primarily on Luke's, though apparently he also knew the reorganized text. The writer of Matthew, who is neither the disciple Matthew nor the Matthew of the Papias tradition, used Mark's account and the reorganized text.

Interestingly, the attempts to restore order to the events of Jesus' life do not end with the Synoptic Gospels. Sometime about 160 A.D. Tatian, a disciple of Justin Martyr, composed a harmony of the Gospels known as the Diatessaron. This harmonization became the standard Gospel text of the Syriac-speaking church until the fifth century. The adoption of the Diatessaron by Christians in the East further underscores the liberties that early Christianity allowed in regard to the transmission and reworking of the Gospels.<sup>5</sup>

Despite a rather turbulent transmission process, the Synoptic Gospels retain an astonishing amount of authentic and reliable material. This we know from the internal evidence. Indeed, Luke did not wholly succeed in restoring the original order of the story, as is evident from the success of Lindsey's reconstructions,<sup>6</sup> but he did transmit in a conservative manner his two Greek sources, one of which contained highly Hebraic material stemming directly from the original Greek translation of the Hebrew. JP

1. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* III 39, 16.

2. Jehoshua Grintz, "Hebrew as the Spoken and Written Language in the Last Days of the Second Temple," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 79 (1960), 33.

3. M. H. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), pp. 14-15.

4. Brad H. Young, *Jesus and His Jewish Parables* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1989), p. 145.

5. James Kugel and Rowan Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), p. 115.

6. Robert L. Lindsey, *Jesus Rabbi & Lord* (Oak Creek, WI: Cornerstone Publishing, 1990), pp. 75-92, 146-150.



## Work of Jerusalem School Featured in Israeli Journal

MISHKAN is a semi-annual theological journal published in Jerusalem by the Caspari Center. Recently, MISHKAN devoted a double issue (No. 17–18) to the work of the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research.

Fifty-seven pages of this special 160-page issue were written by Jerusalem School members, including the articles: "The Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research: An Introduction to the School, Its Objectives and Origins" by David Bivin; "It Is Said to the Elders" by David Flusser; "A New Approach to the Synoptic Gospels" by Robert L. Lindsey; "Why I Am a Member of the Jerusalem School" by Halvor Ronning; and "Talmudic Literature as an Historical Source for the Second Temple Period" by Shmuel Safrai.

Included in the MISHKAN issue is Jerome A. Lund's article, "The Language of Jesus." This is probably the best survey to date of the evidence for the use of Aramaic and Hebrew in first-century Israel. Lund is not a member of the Jerusalem School; but, because of his expertise in Aramaic, he was invited to participate in the Rich Young Ruler seminars conducted by the School in 1986–1987.

To order MISHKAN's "Jerusalem School" issue, send US\$15 (price includes airmail postage) to: MISHKAN, P.O. Box 116, 91000 Jerusalem, Israel.

17. Safrai, *The Land of Israel and Its Sages*, pp. 97–98.

18. Tosefta, Arachin 2:1.

19. Mishnah, Bikkurim 1:5; 3:6.

20. Babylonian Talmud, Sukkah 51<sup>b</sup>–52<sup>a</sup>; cf. Mishnah, Middot 2:5.

21. Babylonian Talmud, Megillah 23<sup>a</sup>; Tosefta, Megillah 3:11.

22. 1 Corinthians 14:34–35.

### *That Small-fry Herod Antipas*

(continued from page 9)

of the argument in this paper. See (Hermann Strack and) Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1922–1960), 2:200–201. In English, see T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1974 [1949]), p. 276: "The answer of Jesus is defiant... 'fox'... describes an insignificant third-rate person as opposed to a person of real power and greatness. To call Herod 'that fox' is as much as to say he is neither a great man nor a straight man; he has neither majesty nor honour."

### *Jesus' Jewish Parents*

(continued from page 11)

found him in the local *bet midrash* (house of study) standing among the scholars and their students and debating with them about matters of halachah.

In the Jewish world of learning, such stories about boy scholars are perfectly believable. When read from a Jewish perspective, the story about Jesus and the teachers in the Temple has an authentic ring and leads one to expect great things of the sage-to-be.<sup>14</sup> JP

### *Place of Women in First-century Synagogues* (continued from page 6)

*Sages in the Mishnaic and Talmudic Period* (Tel-Aviv: United Kibbutz Publishing Co., 1983), pp. 100–101 (Hebrew); idem, "Was There a Women's Gallery in the Synagogue of Antiquity?" *Tarbiz* 33 (1963–1964), 329–338 (Hebrew); Bernadette J. Broton, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), pp. 103–138.

14. Shmuel Safrai, "The Role of Women in the Temple," *Jerusalem Perspective* 21 (Jul/Aug. 1989), 5–6.

15. Mishnah, Yoma 7:1; Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 69<sup>b</sup>.

16. The assembly of "men, women, children and aliens" for the public reading of Torah, held every seven years during the Feast of Tabernacles (Deut. 31:10–13). Cf. Mishnah, Sotah 7:8; Babylonian Talmud, Sotah 41<sup>b</sup>.

1. Shmuel Safrai, "Naming John the Baptist," *Jerusalem Perspective* 20 (May 1989), 1–2. The traditional Jewish celebration of a birth is also the major background to the circumcision of Elisha ben Avuyah, which took place about the last quarter of the first century C.E. (Jerusalem Talmud, Hagigah 77<sup>b</sup>, chpt. 2, halachah 1).

2. The Greek text of Luke 2:22 contains the phrase, "When the days of the purification of them were fulfilled." However, a baby is not impure, nor does it have a period of impurity. The Old Syriac Sinaitic Codex and the Latin Vulgate, as well as part of the Old Latin manuscripts, have "of her," a reading that corresponds to the language of the biblical command. Cf. Shmuel Safrai, "The Role of Women in the Temple," *Jerusalem Perspective* 21 (Jul/Aug. 1989), 5.

3. Tosefta, Keritot 2:21; Mishnah, Keritot 1:7, 2:4.



4. Mishnah, Bechorot 8; Babylonian Talmud, Bechorot 12<sup>b</sup>.

5. Mechilta, Bo 16; to Exodus 13:2 (ed. Horowitz-Rabin, p. 58). This priestly privilege is not Scriptural, but we know that the priesthood had a tendency to develop such privileges in their favor (Mishnah, Shekalim 1:4).

6. Note the conduct of Samuel's parents. They also made annual pilgrimages to a temple of the LORD at Shiloh (1 Sam. 1:3).

7. Cf. Exod. 34:23 and Deut. 16:16.

8. Cf. Mishnah, Hagigah 1:6. The verb **יֵרָאֵה** (*ye-ra'EH*, shall appear) in Exod. 23:17 was interpreted, "shall bring a **זֶרֶךְ** [*re-i-YAH*, 'appearance' sacrifice]," that is, when a pilgrim comes to the Temple, the pilgrim should not come empty-handed (Deut. 16:16).

9. Shmuel Safrai, *Die Wallfahrt im Zeitalter des Zweiten Tempels* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981), pp. 44–97; idem, "Pilgrimage in the Time of Jesus," *Jerusalem Perspective* 22 (Sept./Oct. 1989), 3–4, 12.

10. Avot de-Rabbi Natan 12, Version A.

11. Mishnah, Bikkurim 3:2–3.

12. Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 36<sup>b</sup>.

13. Babylonian Talmud, Gittin 58<sup>a</sup>.

14. Safrai, "Pilgrimage in the Time of Jesus," p. 4.

## Readers' Perspective

(continued from page 2)

wrote the name with an apostrophe. This slurring is similar to the way beginning Hebrew students from English-speaking countries mispronounce the Hebrew word *sha-LOM* as *sh'LOM*.

Even if the spelling adopted by Jews for Jesus helps English-speakers to get the accent in the right place, English-speakers may still incorrectly pronounce the first syllable of Jesus' name as "yuh." If there is concern that people pronounce Jesus' name "the Jewish way," why not capitalize the letters of the accented syllable, as we do in JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE (*ye-SHU-a'*), or simply use an accent mark (*Yeshúa*)? Better still, why not write the name in Hebrew and encourage English-speakers to learn three consonants and three vowels of the Hebrew language? Then they would pronounce Jesus' name correctly no matter what transliteration they met. — Ed.

JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE would like to thank Adaf Yeshu'a, Cedar Park, Texas; Mayme R. Bass of Rosenberg, Texas; Dr. Michael & Ruby Butchko of Riverside, California; Ken & Lenore Mullican of Tulsa, Oklahoma; Pasadena House of Worship, Pasadena, California; and Joseph T. Seem of Emmaus, Pennsylvania. Their generous donations helped make this issue possible.

## Transliteration Key

<b>Hebrew &amp; Aramaic</b>	כ - k	ס, ש - a (like a in father)
Syllables of transliterated words are separated by dots.	צ, ץ - k (like ch in the Scottish loch)	ס - e (like e in net, or e in hey, or somewhere in between)
Capitalization is used to indicate the accented syllable in words of more than one syllable. See p. 11 of the Nov/Dec 1989 issue for a full description of the transliteration system used in JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE.	ך - ch	ס, ש - e (like e in net)
<b>Consonants</b>	שׁ - s (voiced guttural)	*ס, ש - i (like i in ski)
ס - ʾ (silent)	פ - p	*ס, ש - o (like o in bone)
ב - b	ף - f	*ס, ש - u (like u in flu)
ו - v	ט - ts (like ts in nets)	ס - e (silent, or as short as e in happening, or as long as e in net)
ג - g	ק - k	<b>Diphthongs</b>
ד - d	ר - r	*ס - ai
ה - h (or silent)	ש - sh	*ס - oi
ו - v	ס - s	*ס - ui
ז - z	ל - l	<b>Greek</b>
ח - h (voiceless guttural)	*The form of the letter at the end of a word.	Transliterations are based on the Society of Biblical Literature system.
ט - t	<b>Vowels</b>	
* - y (or silent)	*The ס is used here as a point of reference.	
	ס - a (like a in father; rarely like o in bone)	

## Glossary

**bet midrash** — (**בֵּית מִדְּרָשׁ**, *bet mid-RASH*, house of study) center for study and teaching of the Torah. The *bet mid-RASH* was usually connected with a synagogue, and learning took place in the synagogue's assembly hall or in a room adjoining it.

**halachah** — (**הֲלָכָה**, *ha-la-KAH*; plural: **הֲלָכוֹת**, *ha-la-KOT*) law, regulation; the legal ruling on a particular issue; the body of Jewish law, especially the legal part of rabbinic literature.

**midrash** — (**מִדְּרָשׁ**, *mid-RASH*) literally, an inquiry or investigation, but as a technical term, "midrash" refers to an exposition of biblical text. The term can also be applied to a collection of such expositions or, capitalized, to the whole midrashic literature written during the first millennium A.D.

**R.** — the English translation of רַב, an abbreviation used in rabbinic literature for the honorific titles רַבִּי (*ra-BI*, Rabbi), רַבָּנִי (*ra-BAN*, Rabban), רַבִּי (*rav*, Rav) and רַבְּנֵנוּ (*ra-BE-nu*, Rabbenu).

**Second Temple period** — literally, the period from the rebuilding of the Temple (536–516 B.C.) to its destruction by the Romans in 70 A.D. The term usually refers to the latter part of this period, beginning with the Hasmonean Uprising in

168 B.C., and often extending to the end of the Bar-Kochva Revolt in 135 A.D.

**Septuagint** — the second-century B.C. Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures.

**tannaic** (ta-na'ik) — pertaining to the Tannaim (**תַּנְיָיִם**, *ta-na'IM*), sages from Hillel (died c. 10 B.C.) to those of the generation (c. 230 A.D.) after Rabbi Yehudah ha-Nasi, the compiler of the Mishnah.

**targum** — an Aramaic translation of a portion of the Hebrew Scriptures. Plural: *targumim* or *targums*. The *targumim* not only provided a translation for those who did not understand the original language, but also provided an interpretation of the biblical text. Since the inspired text could not be changed or altered in even the smallest way, the targum made possible the insertion of various explanations and clarifications.

**Shema** — (**שְׁמָע**, *she-MA'*, Hear!) the first word of Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear (*Shema*), O Israel! The LORD our God, the LORD is one." In Judaism, this verse is the supreme affirmation of God's oneness and uniqueness. Since at least the second century A.D., the Shema has consisted of three passages: Deut. 6:4–9; 11:13–21; Num. 15:37–41.



# International Synoptic Society

**T**he International Synoptic Society supports the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research by serving as a vehicle through which interested individuals can participate in the School's research.

The Society raises financial support for publication of research carried out by the Jerusalem School (for example, the *Jerusalem Synoptic Commentary*), facilitates informal discussion groups focusing on the Synoptic Gospels, and sponsors student research assistants and other volunteers who work with the Jerusalem School.

Annual membership in the Society is: Regular US\$100 or £70; Fellow \$300 or £210; Sponsor \$500 or £350; Patron \$1000 or £700; Lifetime member \$5000 or £3500 and over. Membership dues can be paid in monthly or quarterly installments, and in most currencies (see box at bottom of page 2).

Members of the Society receive a beautiful certificate of membership, and a free subscription to JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE. They are also entitled to unique privileges such as pre-publication releases of *Commentary* materials, including preliminary reconstructions of stories in the conjectured biography of Jesus. Major publications of the Jerusalem School will be inscribed with Society members' names.

Checks should be made payable to the "Jerusalem School" and designated "ISS." Members in the United States can receive a tax-deductible receipt by sending their dues through the Jerusalem School's U.S. affiliates: Center for Judaic-Christian Studies, P.O. Box 293040, Dayton, OH 45429 (Tel. 513-434-4550; Fax 513-439-0230); Centre for the Study of Biblical Research, P.O. Box 2050, Redlands, CA 92373-0641 (Tel. 909-793-4669; Fax 909-793-1071).

## Jerusalem School Evenings

Please contact us if your synagogue, church or organization would like to know more about the International Synoptic Society and Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research. We will be happy to arrange a visit by one of the Jerusalem School's representatives.

Our representatives will answer questions and present a program that includes the showing of a video filmed in Israel. The video incorporates interviews with members of the Jerusalem School.

If a visit by our representative cannot be arranged, you may obtain a copy of the Jerusalem School's video for your own use. Please contact the Centre for the Study of Biblical Research at the above address.

## The Jerusalem School

**T**he Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research (מכון ירושלים לחקר התנכיים) is a consortium of Jewish and Christian scholars who are examining the Synoptic Gospels within the context of the language and culture in which Jesus lived. Their work confirms that Jesus was a Jewish sage who taught in Hebrew and used uniquely rabbinic teaching methods.

The Jerusalem School scholars believe the first narrative of Jesus' life was written in Hebrew, and that much of it can be recovered from the Greek texts of the Synoptic Gospels. The School's central objective is to reconstruct as much as possible of that conjectured Hebrew narrative. This is an attempt to recover a lost Jewish document from the Second Temple period, a Hebrew scroll that, like

so much Jewish literature of the period, has been preserved only in Greek.

As a means to its objective, the Jerusalem School has begun preparations for production of the *Jerusalem Synoptic Commentary*, a detailed commentary on the Synoptic Gospels that will reflect the insight provided by the School's research. Current research of Jerusalem School members and others is reported in the pages of JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE.

The Jerusalem School was registered in Israel as a non-profit research institute in 1985. Its members are Prof. David Flusser, Dr. Robert L. Lindsey, Prof. Shmuel Safrai, David Bivin, Dr. Weston W. Fields, Dr. R. Steven Notley, Dwight A. Pryor, Halvor Ronning,

Mirja Ronning, Prof. Chana Safrai and Prof. Bradford H. Young.

